

cases they probably act as directive marks, diverting the attention of an enemy from the body of the insect (see pp. 371-5 and 440-1). To the former category probably belong the remarkable eye-like spots on the tegmina of certain Harpagid Mantides; for Mr. Marshall writes (1902) of a South African species: "The eye-like markings on the wings of the Mantis, *Pseudocercobotra wahlbergi*, are, I think, almost certainly of a terrifying character. When the insect is irritated the wings are raised over its back in such a manner that the tegmina stand side by side, and the markings on them then present a very striking resemblance to the great yellow eyes of a bird of prey, or some feline animal, which might well deter an insectivorous enemy. It is noticeable that the insect is always careful to keep the wings directed towards the point of attack, and this is often done without altering the position of the body."—E. B. P.]

24. EVIDENCE OF A SUPERSTITIOUS DREAD OF THE LARVA OF *Chorocampa elpenor*. (E. B. P.)

Professor Weismann and Lady Verney have shown that the larva of *C. elpenor* terrifies birds, and I have found that *Lacerta viridis* was at first much intimidated, but finally overcame its fright and devoured the larva. An account of these observations is given in "Colours of Animals," Poulton, 1890, pp. 260, 261. I have recently ascertained that the larva is regarded with superstitious fear in certain parts of Ireland. This I owe to the kindness of my friend Mrs. Nuttall, the American anthropologist, who has drawn my attention to an article by Mrs. Frances J. Battersby, of Cromlyn, Westmeath, in "Knowledge," vol. 21, 1898, p. 256, and reprinted in "Public Opinion," Nov. 11, 1898, p. 622. The writer quotes the following quaint and amusing account of the larva, and the sympathetic magic by which its supposed evil influence is cured, from "A Chorographical Description of the County Westmeath," by Sir Henry Piers, of Insternaght (1682): "We have a certain reptile found in our bogs called by the Irish the 'Connagh worm.' This is an ugly worm, sometimes as thick as a man's thumb, about two or three inches long, having, as all reptiles have, many short feet, a large head, great goggle eyes and glaring, between which riseth or jutteth forth one thick bristle, in shape like a horn, which

is prominent and bendeth forward about three-quarters of an inch. Whatever beast happeneth to feed where this venomous worm hath crept (some say if he do but tread there) is certainly poisoned, yet may be infallibly cured if timely remedy be applied; the case is twofold, yet in effect but one, both proceeding from the very worm itself. Some there are that take this worm and, putting it into the hand of a new-born child, close the hand about it, tying it up with the worm closed in it till it be dead. This child ever after, by stroking the beast affected recovers it, and so it will if the water wherein the child washes be sprinkled on the beast. I have known a man that thus would cure his neighbours' cattle though he never saw them. The other method of cure, which I like much better, is by boring an augur-hole in a well-grown willow-tree, and in it imprisoning but not immediately killing the worm, so close by a wooden peg that no air may get in, and therein leaving him to die at leisure. The leaves and tender branches of this tree ever after if bruised in water, and the affected beast therewith be sprinkled, he is cured. The All-wise and Ever-gracious God having thus in His Providence ordered it that not only this venomous reptile, but divers others, and who knows if not all, did we know the right method of using them, should have in themselves their own antidotes, that so we might have a remedy at hand as the poet sayeth:—

‘Una eademque manus vulnus opemque ferat.’”

The authoress also shows that a superstitious dread of the larva still persists among the Irish folk. In all the descriptions the terrifying eye-like marks have a prominent place. A “clergyman’s daughter, walking near a ditch, ‘saw her little dog barking and snapping at a most curious-looking creature with staring goggle eyes.’” One of the country-folk said that the creature “had a round head like a cat’s, and goggle eyes.” “He was afraid to touch it, as its eyes glared like a frog’s, and said it bit or stung cattle, when their heads swelled up; and a man was once bit on the leg, which swelled up, and he nearly died.” A labourer, going to fetch a tin basin from a field, “found a Connagh sitting in it, glaring at him.” A woman lost one of these caterpillars which she was carrying on a stick, and was reproved by her father “for not having killed the Connagh by smashing it with a stone, ‘as now it would sting the cattle.’” The authoress, who is an experienced collector

of Lepidoptera, has also shown specimens of the larva to the country-folk, and ascertained that it was what they call the "Connagh," so that we are not dependent for the identification upon the loose descriptions of ignorant and excited people. She states that there are two models of the "Connagh" in the Dublin Museum "studded with coloured stones, and supposed to have been used as charms."\*

Miss Eleanor A. Ormerod in her Eleventh Report, for 1887 (p. 126), also shows that this larva is looked upon "at least in one district in Ireland as the cause of murrain in cattle." Thus "In the course of last year Miss Fleming, writing from Derry Lea, Monasterevan, Co. Kildare, Ireland, mentioned:—'There is a very large caterpillar sometimes found here (I have seen it four inches long), which is said by popular voice to give the disease called "murrain" when licked or swallowed by a cow. The people call this creeping thing a Murrain Worm.'" On Aug. 7, 1887, Miss Fleming sent a specimen which proved to be the larva of *C. elpenor*. Another specimen was sent on Aug. 20, 1887, to Miss Ormerod, by Mr. N. Richardson, from the Estate Office, Castle Comer, Co. Kilkenny.

In the autumn of 1898 (Twenty-second Report, for 1898, p. 72) Miss Ormerod received from Mr. Thomas Wade, of Newcastle-West, Co. Limerick, an account of the disease of a cow which "the farmers, not only here, but all over Munster, seem convinced . . . is caused by 'a worm.'" Although Mr. Wade suggests that they refer to "a lizard, or something akin to it," it is almost certain that we have here another case of the same superstition.

Mr. G. H. Carpenter, B.Sc., F.E.S., of the Science and Art Museum, Dublin, informs me that in 1901 a police-constable in Co. Mayo forwarded a larva of *elpenor* as "a rare kind of reptile," and that a similar description has been given to him by other country correspondents. The evidence of alarm and superstitious dread is however of greater significance than the employment of a word which is so often used inaccurately.

\* Mr. Carpenter informs me that the cylindrical form of these models and the large size of the caudal horn on one of them suggest *Acherontia* rather than *Chærocampa*.